The Top Runners' Quarterly

Newsletter of The Top Runners' Conference, The Official **Netrunner**® Players' Organization
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The FIRST ISSUE is finally here!

Welcome to the first issue of the *Top Runners' Quarterly*. Starting with this issue, you can expect regular articles on demos and tournaments, and the State of the Corp address by our own Jennifer Clarke Wilkes. We will also be including feature articles on special events, **Netrunner** puzzles, and other NR-related topics.

If you have any ideas for articles, would like to contribute something to a regular column, or have any other suggestions, please direct them to the newsletter editor, Scott Dickie, at:

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Gridlock II: Vying for World Domination

by Jens Kreutzer
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"I pulled no bit-gainer cards, no Bodyweight™ or Jack 'n' Joe, and was even forced to include Codeslinger as a sentry breaker!" Such statements are often heard after sealed-deck tourneys, expressing a certain dissatisfaction with the random aspect of the format. Even though it is the general consensus that **Netrunner** plays excellently right out of the starter box, getting flatlined in a sealed match by a Corp player who got both Schlaghund and I Got A Rock (plus the trace cards to use them) does seem a bit harsh. This happened to me once, by the way. A constructed tourney, on the other hand, tends to scare off lots of players who think that they haven't got enough cards to be competitive—which is, unfortunately, not altogether wrong.



In 1998, the TRC is organizing the first **Netrunner** World Championships. At last we can find out whose deckbuilding and playing skills are fit for World Domination! During Gridlock Weekend II, Feb. 27 to March 1, qualifier tourneys will be held all over the world. The top Runners and Corps will be invited to the championship tournament, World Domination, to be held via Internet Relay Chat (IRC), beginning on April 1.

In light of the problems mentioned above, the big question was finding a format that would be equally fair to each and every participant, eliminating the advantages of "card lords" as well as the luck of the draw in sealed-deck play. Therefore, TRC people came up with a completely new format, which could be labeled "limited-pool constructed." In December 1997, an election was held via the Internet. Using a ballot form, players posted their suggestions for a card pool that would be the basis for each participant's tourney deck. Certain limitations on card type and rarity ensured a healthy mix, and in the end, only six rare cards ended up on the list. Considering that there are 180 cards total (90 for each side), and that each card may only be included once in any deck ("Highlander" format), players should have no great difficulty in constructing almost any style of tourney deck they fancy.

Having addressed the issue of the format, the TRC faced another difficulty: How will a Runner based in the Eurotheater face off against a Corp that's based in Sydney City Grid? What about a US hacker versus Arasaka in Japan? The only feasible solution was obvious, actually: Do the Long-Distance-Link stuff via the Net. So this is what you have to do to become the 1998 **Netrunner** World Champion: Get the list of cards that are allowed for the tourney (available at the TRC website); build yourself two decks for the tourney using only the listed cards, and each card only once; keep your eyes open for the Gridlock II tourney nearest the place where you live (a list of tourneys is also available at the TRC website); go to the tourney and play. If you're among the top finishers, you might just make it to World Domination. This depends on how many players are competing in your Gridlock II tourney—the more players there are, the more will advance to the next round. Perhaps only the first, possibly as many as the top three players. For the Finals, the TRC will coordinate IRC access for the competitors and arrange times convenient to the individual opponents. Further details are to be announced. But one thing is certain, the prizes for the winner will be everything but shabby, not to mention the bragging rights for the world's Top Runner!

State of the Corp - February 1998

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
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Many exciting developments have taken place since the TRC went public last fall. The number of cells continues to grow at an amazing pace, with new countries coming on board in Europe and Asia. Our second series of Gridlock Weekend worldwide tournaments already has more events than the first, and promises to be very big indeed. Shortly we'll have crowned the first **Netrunner** World Champion.

But is all of this having any effect where it counts? What is Wizards of the Coast doing about the long-awaited *Silent Impact*™ expansion? Will the line become active once more?

The outlook is very positive. Since the Five Rings Publishing Group took over responsibility for all the non-**Magic**® trading card games, I have been working with Ryan Dancey to explore low-cost options that will help to promote **Netrunner** more effectively, including innovative use of the Web pages. (Full details will have to wait until we've hammered out the plan.)

More exciting is the very real possibility of publishing *Silent Impact.* We are putting a survey form into *Retailer Direct*™, Wizards' retailer newsletter, to gauge interest in another **Netrunner** expansion. Retailers will be able to call a toll-free number to register their responses. Simultaneously, we are conducting a retailer survey to gather needed information on potential sales numbers. I am also reporting individual members' commitment to purchase. And just possibly, we can print the expansion profitably with a much smaller number of cards than originally thought.

The mailing list discussions concerning the "Identities" supplement have also been favorably received by Ryan Dancey. While there are still a lot of questions to be answered, I believe we will see this released in some form—perhaps sample cards in *The Duelist*®, perhaps online. And Ryan is also fighting to get **Netrunner** a regular (if small) column in *The Duelist* itself.

Thanks to all of you, **Netrunner** is coming alive again. I believe that the spring of 1998 will see a rebirth of this fine game.

Cortical Scrub: The Colonel's Failure

by Ben Matthews
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It's the end of a long, grueling battle between you, the wily Runner, and Tara B., the devious Corporation. You managed to score an early Political Overthrow from HQ, but suffered some serious setbacks from Tara's goon squads for your troubles. In the meantime she also managed to advance a Vapor Ops to extremely serious levels, and scored a PO of her own. The Good News is that the Corp is down to one card left in R&D, which must certainly be the third Political Overthrow. The Bad News is that as soon as Tara draws that card, she'll be able to score it with the 9 counters still left on her Vapor Ops. The Really Bad News is the high levels of protection provided to the Corp by an almost unlimited cash supply and several pieces of dangerous ice. Oh...and don't forget the fact that you're currently broke, and don't even have a sentry breaker installed. Do you have what it takes to get through Tara's defenses to the winning agenda? Good luck, Runner.

<u>Tara B., the Corporation (you will run forts from right to left):</u>
HQ: 30 bits, no cards: Colonel Failure (unrezzed), Data Wall 2.0
R&D: One card left: Quandary, Marionette (unrezzed)
Upgraded with rezzed Antiquated Interface Routines and Crystal Palace Station Grid
Archives: Lots of cards, but no agenda
SDF1: Vapor Ops with 9 counters: Colonel Failure, Mazer

<u>You, the Runner:</u>
Bits: You're broke!
Stack: 0 cards
Trash: Any cards of your choosing
Hand: Three preps (but nothing that can be used to generate bits or pass ice)
Installed Programs: Skeleton Passkeys, Boring Bit
Installed Resources: 2 hidden resources (of your choice, can be two different. cards)
Installed Hardware: Microtech Backup Drive (with a sentry breaker of your choice)

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The DFW Short Circuit: Burning it in

by Ben Matthews (with thanks to Skip Pickle)
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To be honest, I can't remember when I first met Skip Pickle. I'm pretty sure that our first contact was at a WotC-sponsored demo in Arlington in the later half of 1996 while I was working on *Mastering* ***Netrunner***, and we've since played many a game of **Netrunner**. At that demo was born the idea of starting the Short Circuit tournament series, with a goal of having rotating tournaments between Dallas and Fort Worth.

Together, Skip and I have taken many different approaches to tournament organization, but we have learned a few things about scheduling and locations in the last year and a half. We provide as much advance notice as possible for our tournaments, generally scheduling at least a month in advance, and we try to play in stores that carry **Netrunner** on the shelf.

Our initial tournament efforts consisted of asking stores if we could run tournaments, and then inviting the friends we had exposed to **Netrunner** personally, or met while playing the game. Our next idea for promoting tournaments consisted of contacting the manager of one of the bigger game store chains in the area. He seemed very receptive to having us game regularly in his store, and promised to promote the game throughout the chain. Our first mistake was not following up. We found out the day of the first tournament that the store had not done any advertising. We should have paid more attention to the details of how the promotion would take place, and helped if necessary.

At this point I started creating full-color posters (I had a new color printer—what can I say? It's fun to use! :) with the tournament locations, times, etc. We tried to distribute these to the stores where the tournaments were taking place, which worked relatively well. What didn't work was the reception we received from a few of the retailers we talked to. I had to argue with one of the owners where I had played on a regular basis for almost a year to allow me to put up a poster (and when I returned the next week, it was mysteriously gone). His argument was that I was actually taking revenue from his store and giving it to another store. While that is a legitimate worry, I should have been more persuasive about improving **Netrunner** sales overall in DFW (which should have the effect of increasing his sales as well). Another owner actually wanted to know what was in it for him to put up the posters or even allow us to have a tournament in his store. It was pretty frustrating at the time. Again, if I had been a bit more organized and/or persuasive, then we might have had more success using posters.

Towards the beginning/middle of 1997, we found a place out in Fort Worth called Grand Slam. They were very hospitable, put up a signup sheet for a tournament, and agreed to have cards on hand for our players to buy. We regularly run sealed-deck tournaments every other month or so there now. Skip was able to develop a good relationship with the owner, and Jim is always glad to see us back. At about the same time, I ran across an old friend who still organizes **Magic** tournaments in the DFW area, and who ran the very first **Netrunner** tournament in the area, sometime in the fall of 1996. I asked for his advice on getting our tournaments going successfully, and he offered to put our tournament on a postcard flyer that another local store (Keith's Comics) sends out to their clientele advertising their **Magic** tournaments. While we really didn't generate too many extra players at the time of the mailout, I did develop a nice working relationship with the owner of the chain as well as the manager of the store where we played. We did have a bit of trouble getting **Netrunner** stock into the store, but they at least tried to accommodate us.

I think my main point is that you should try to develop a good relationship with one or more store owners in your area. If you play your tournaments in their stores, they can make all the difference in the world in how the tournaments go for the long term. Be willing to promote the game yourself—play **Netrunner** casually with a friend in an established gaming store, and invite people who wander by to watch to learn the game. Once they've played a bit, get their email address/phone number and invite them to your next tournament.Have fun. Play **Netrunner**. Talk to store owners. Teach people to play. Hold tournaments. Burn it in.

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